
PRESS RELEASE

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PREPARING FOR CATASTROPHIC EVENTS IS KEY TO RECOVERY

Public Safety Representatives and Elected Officials Learn Strategies for Disaster Response from Emergency Preparedness Experts

[ONTARIO, CALIF.] – Earlier today, emergency management experts told more than 400 first responders, local government leaders and other regional representatives about the importance of collaboration when preparing for, and responding to, regional disasters at the “Dare to Prepare: Secure Your City and Community” Regional Earthquake Awareness and Preparedness Conference. The event highlighted the strategies needed to reduce death, injury and property damages associated with potential emergencies that Southern California faces on a daily basis. The conference was co-sponsored by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) and the City of Los Angeles Emergency Preparedness Department.

“Whether it is a natural or man-made catastrophe, it is a virtual certainty that you will be faced with a very real crisis at some point during your time here in Southern California,” said San Bernardino County Supervisor and SCAG President Gary Ovitt. “If there are lessons to be learned from recent disasters, it is that local government leaders and first responders are going to be at the front lines, particularly during the first few critical days.”

Attendees of the day-long conference heard personal stories of emergency response situations from experts at the local, state and federal levels, with special emphasis on coordinating preparedness and response efforts. Experts stressed the urgent need for information and resource sharing when communities are confronted with emergencies.

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Speakers discussed Southern California's unique challenge of having to prepare for fires, floods, earthquakes and man-made calamities at a moment's notice in a vast geographic area. The constant theme was that emergency planners must collaborate with other emergency preparedness agencies to design response plans that will decrease the impacts of a catastrophic event.

The Mayor of Gulfport, Miss., Brent Warr, shared his personal experience of facing the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, and leading his city's efforts to recover from the catastrophic event.

"You can not comprehend the true impact of Hurricane Katrina's wake from pictures on a television screen or in a newspaper. Katrina not only ripped apart our cities and communities, it also left an indelible mark on the lives of hundreds of thousands. The region has been forever changed, but we all learned valuable lessons that will ensure the region is better prepared for emergency situations in the future. Only through collaboration with our neighbors, and leaders at the State and Federal levels, have we been able to begin the recovery process and prepare for the challenges we will face," said Warr.

Local government and emergency response leaders were urged to intensify mitigation measures, such as building inspections and brush clearance, to reduce potential impacts of a cataclysmic event. Speakers congratulated local leaders for their due diligence with regular emergency simulations that identify response strengths and vital areas needing improvement.

"The earthquake is inevitable, but the disaster is not. It is this type of partnership and planning that will help us survive and thrive in the aftermath," stated Dr. Lucile Jones, the United States Geological Survey's Multi-Hazards Coordinator for Southern California.